

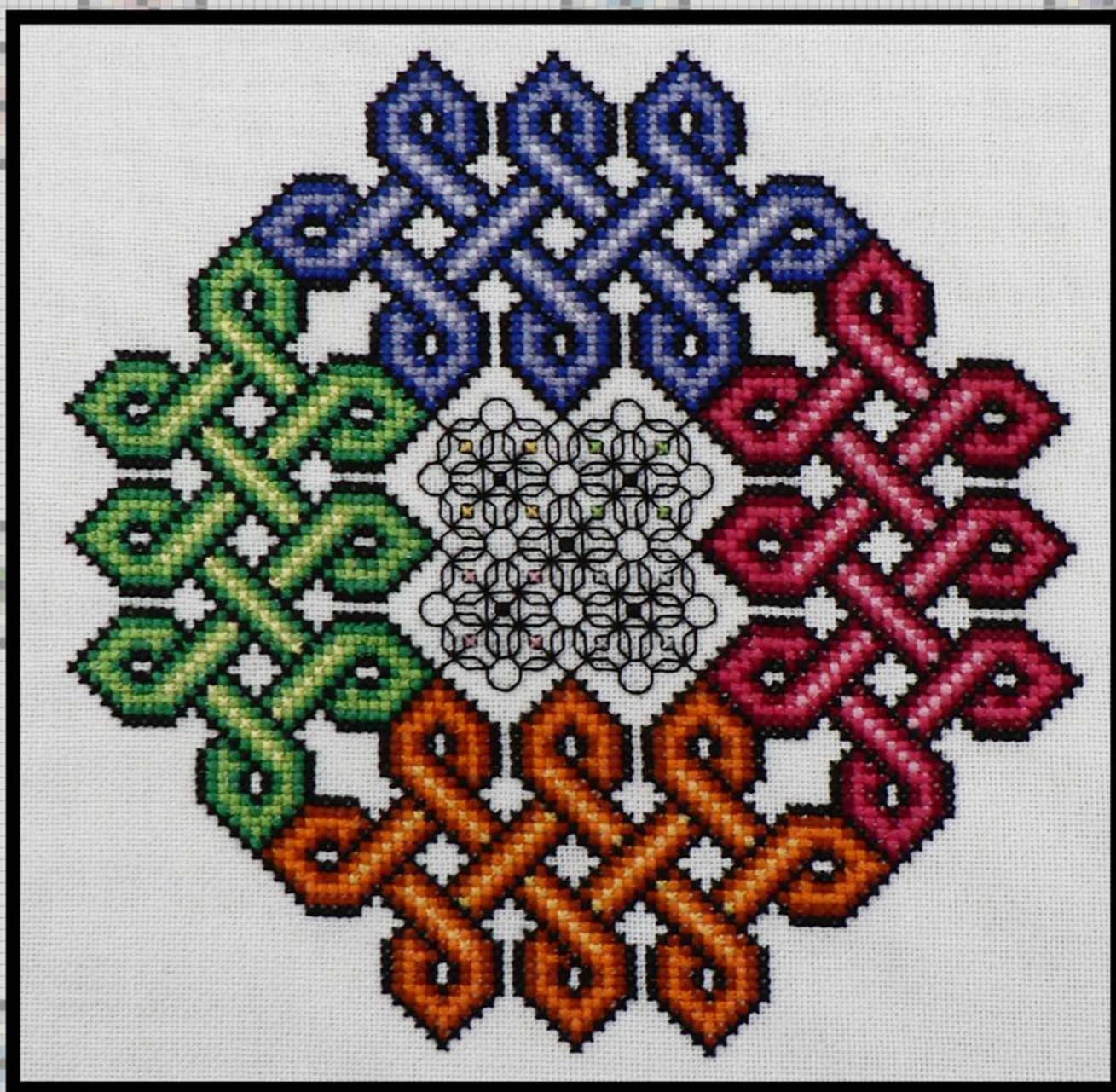


# *Blackwork Journey*

## *Techniques*

TQ0007

### **How to Cross Stitch**



***The Working Environment by Liz Almond***

## Section A

### Basic Information – How to Cross Stitch

## Section B

Further information about fabric and threads used for cross stitch and counted thread techniques

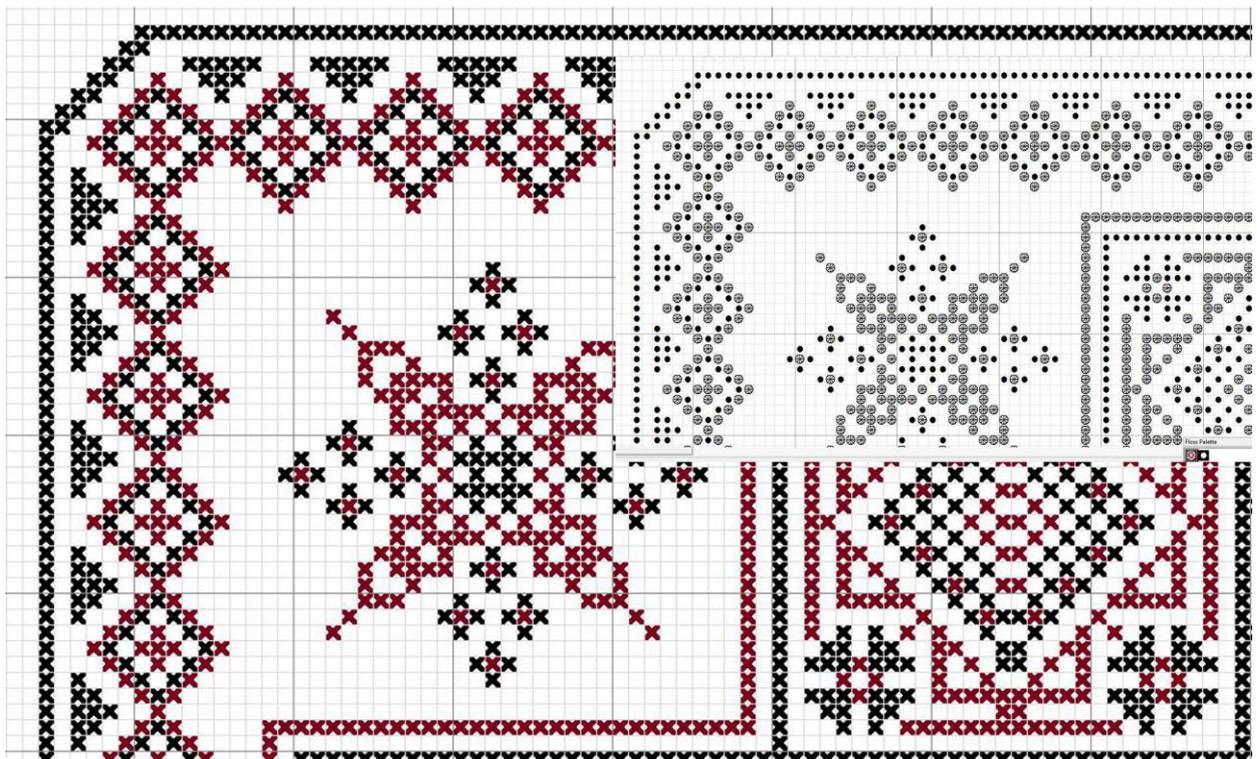
## Section A

### *How to Cross Stitch*

Cross stitch is one of the oldest forms of embroidery and can be found all over the world. It is a counted thread technique.

Cross-stitch is often combined with other popular forms of embroidery, such as Hardanger embroidery or blackwork embroidery. Cross-stitch may also be combined with other work, such as canvaswork or drawn thread work.

Beadwork and other embellishments such as paillettes, small buttons, charms, and speciality threads of various kinds may also be used.



*Fig.1 Section from CH0231 “Point des croix” showing stitches displayed as crosses and as symbols. Black and red cross-stitch patterns are characteristic of the folk embroidery of eastern and central Europe.*

***Equipment needed***

***Materials: Aida or evenweave.***

Aida is a blockweave material with a grid pattern of regular spaced holes for stitching through. The most popular count is 14 holes to the inch. It also comes in 16 and 18 count which is finer. It is available in a wide range of colours.

Evenweave consists of single threads. An appropriate count for a beginner would be 28, which means there are 28 threads to the inch. Cross stitch would be worked over TWO threads. A 28 count evenweave is the SAME as a 14 count aida



*Fig.2 The red pin cushion is worked on 28 count evenweave. The wooden pincushion is worked in blackwork on 16 count aida and the biscornu is worked on 14 count aida.*

***Threads:***

Most cross stitch designs are stitched in stranded cotton. It is available in skeins and there are six individual strands. Pull a length of thread from the skein, then cut a length approx 18 inches long. Separate the strands carefully and then recombine the number of strands you need to stitch with.

When using 14count aida or 28 count evenweave use TWO strands. To create a heavier stitch use three strands. If using a kit or a chart, the instructions will tell you how many strands to use.

Specialist threads for example, metallic can be used to create different effects.

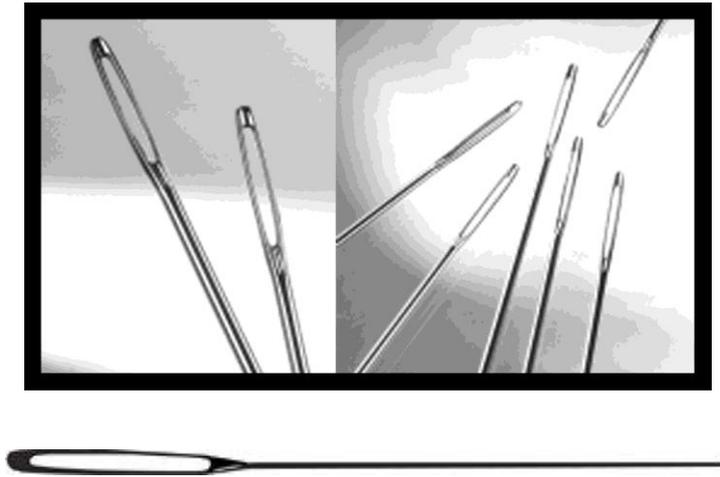
(See Section 2Detailed information).



*Fig.3 Anchor and DMC embroidery threads provide a wealth of colours and texture for the needlewoman to explore.*

### ***Needle:***

Always work cross stitch with a blunt tapestry needle to avoid splitting the blocks or threads. I use a No.24 needle for 28 count evenweave or 14 count aida and a No. 26 needle for finer fabric such as 16 or 18 count (32 threads to the inch and 36 threads to the inch.)



*Fig.4 Tapestry needles from John James*

The long eye of this needle is designed to hold several strands of thread or wool which pass easily through the fabric without splitting the material.

***Chart:***

*Fig.1 above shows an example of a cross stitch chart. It may be shown as symbols, coloured blocks or crosses.*

Every colour has its own symbol and the chart key will identify which symbol represents which colour. The key also indicated how many strands to use.

Back stitch, which is often used to outline cross stitch is worked in ONE strand. Cross stitch is usually worked in TWO strands.

***Hoop:***

A hoop will help keep the tension taut when stitching but it is not essential.

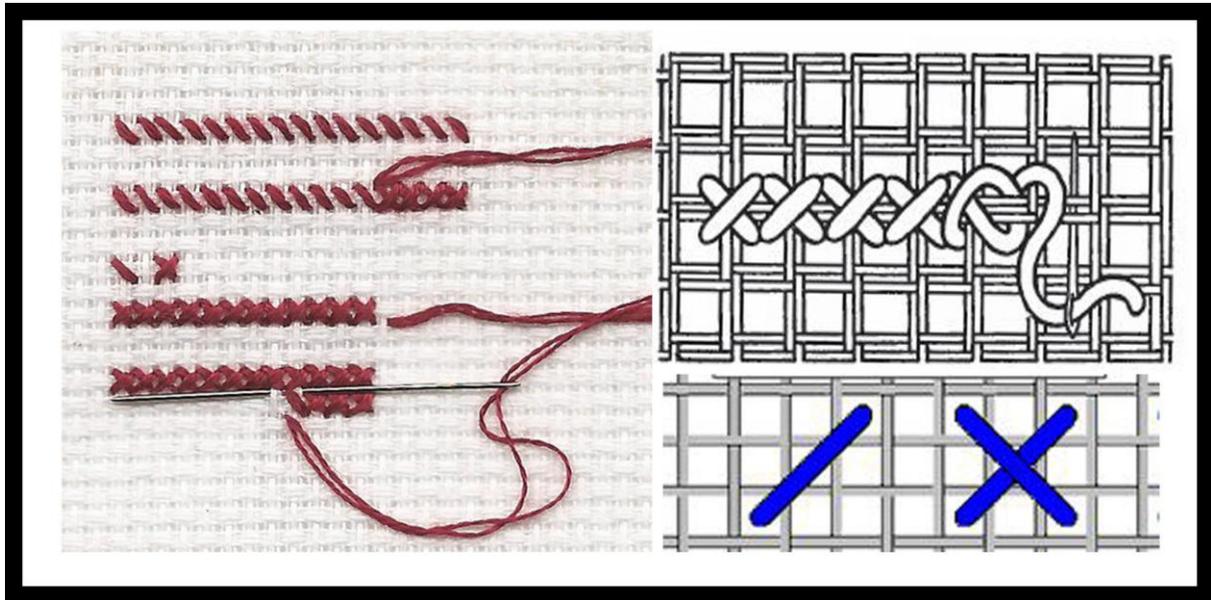
***Starting to cross stitch:***

Always start in the centre of the fabric and work out towards the edges to position the embroidery correctly on the material. The chart usually has centre marks on it. Fold your material lightly into quarters to find the centre.

Thread the needle with the correct number of strands. Count the stitches on the chart to find the centre and make your first stitch.

There are two ways of working cross stitch:

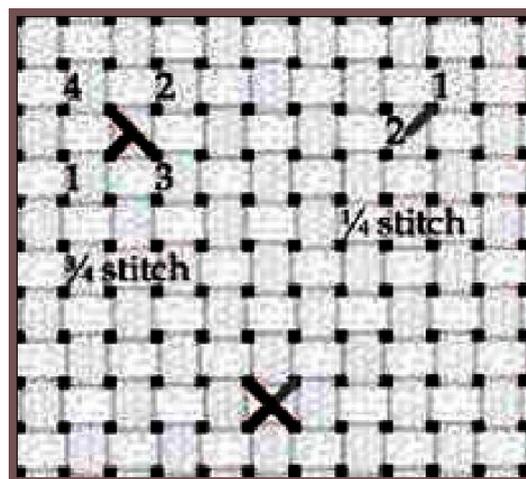
*Cross stitch* works a row of half stitches from left to right or right to left, over an even number of blocks or threads and then returns to complete the stitches. The top stitch always lies in the same direction



*Fig.5 Cross stitch worked as a row and worked as an individual cross.*

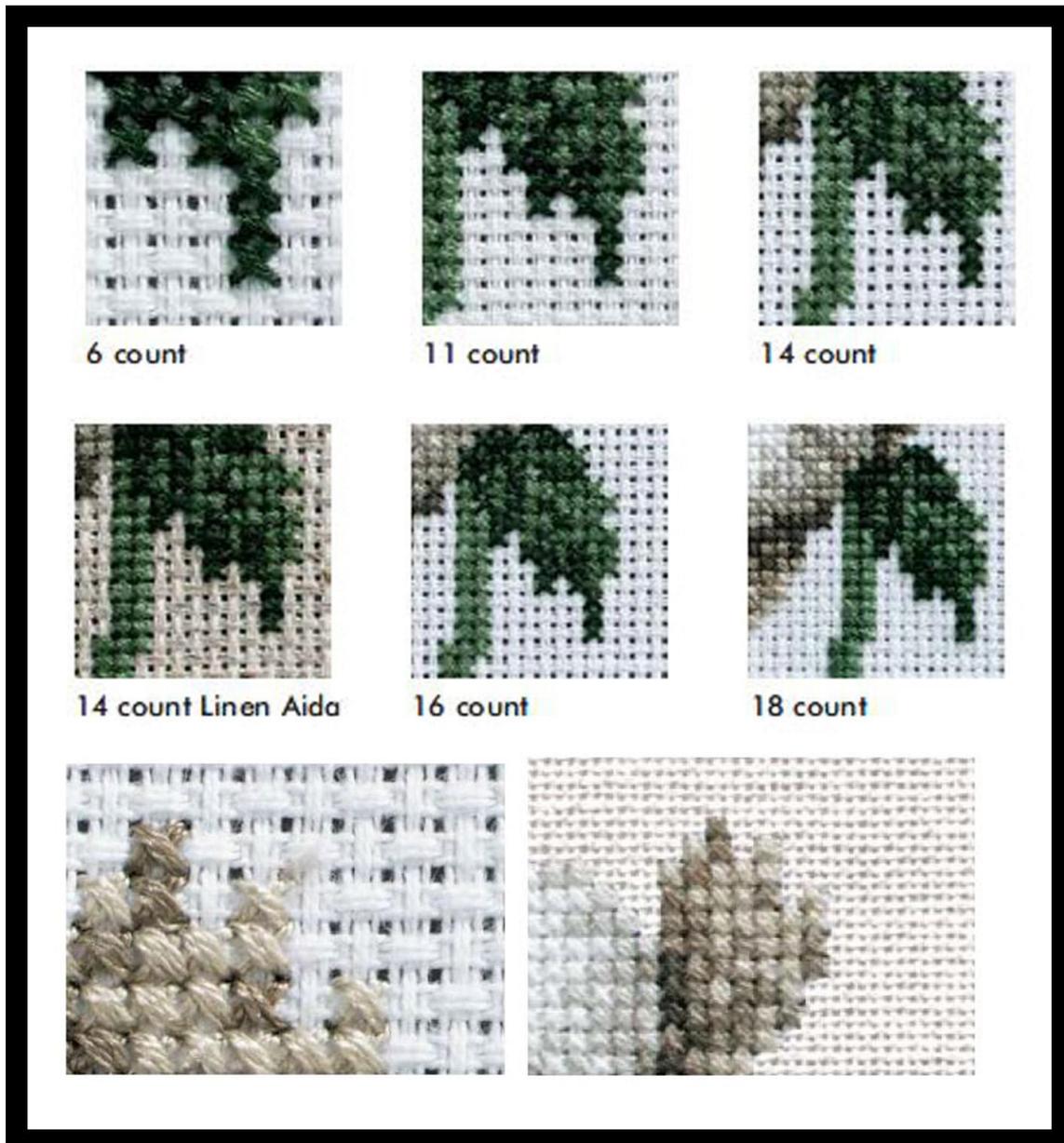
I work the cross as a complete stitch at a time. I find it neater and easier to count,

*Fig.6 Cross stitch*



*Fig.7 Part stitches worked on aida*

Many charts use half, quarter and three-quarters stitches. These are easy to do on evenweave but more difficult on aida because the block has to be split. If the chart has a number of these fractional stitches evenweave would make a more practical choice of fabric. Use the diagrams to help..



*Fig.8 Cross stitches worked on aida and evenweave*



*Fig.9 Letters worked on 28 count evenweave in two strands of cotton*

## **Section B**

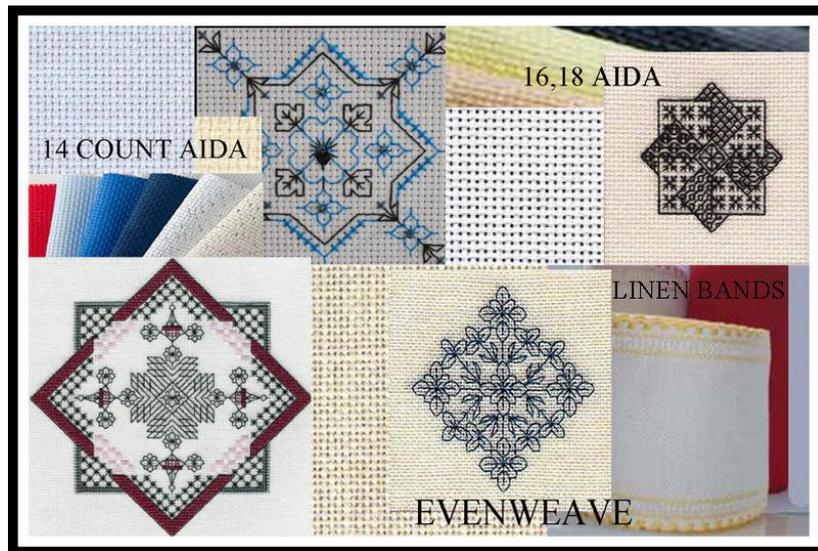
### **Detailed information about fabric and threads used for cross stitch and counted thread techniques**

#### *Materials*

Aida or blockweave is woven in blocks and stitches are worked in every hole. It is available in a variety of counts i.e. holes to the inch. The most common are 11,14,16 and 18. The higher the fabric count, the smaller the design. It is available in a wide range of widths and colours and can be made of a mixture of cotton, synthetic or linen. 22 count hardanger can also be classed as a blockweave.

Beginners may find it easier to stitch on 14 count aida. Alternative choices of fabric are evenweaves and linen. They come in finer counts and are more suited to the experienced embroider.

Whether to use an evenweave fabric or Aida blockweave for counted threadwork techniques will be largely determined by your eyesight, ease of working and confidence. Working on evenweave can be more stressful, but practice and experience helps determine which fabrics are the most suitable for you. Working out the correct size of fabric required, especially if you use a different count of fabric other than the one recommended, cannot be left to guesswork, so before you make any decisions regarding size, start by learning the basic facts about the different embroidery fabrics you will encounter.



*Fig.10 Different fabrics suitable for cross stitch*

There are many manufacturers of both blockweave and evenweave fabrics. I have listed the fabrics most easily available from your local supplier and from the internet.

Research on the internet will show you the composition and colours of the fabrics widely available. For example,

14 Count aida is a blockweave fabric which may be made of

100% Cotton or a mixture

The most popular cross stitch fabric, easy to count yet it allows good detail. This fabric is featured in more cross stitch publications than any other fabric.

28 Count Brittany is an evenweave fabric composed of;

52% Cotton, 48% Rayon

Brittney is a soft easy care fabric. For cross stitch, it is equivalent to 14 count Aida when worked over two threads and at the same time offers the embroiderer a more even surface.



### Zweigart Aida

6 Count Binca  
8 Count Aida  
11 Count Aida  
14 Count Aida  
14 Count Aida - Jeans  
14 Count Aida - Lurex  
14 Count Aida -  
Natural  
14 Count Aida - Rustico  
14 Count Aida -  
Vintage  
14 Count Aida -  
Yorkshire  
14 Count Linen Aida  
16 Count Aida  
16 Count Aida - Rustico  
18 Count Aida  
18 Count Aida -  
Vintage  
20 Count Aida  
22 Count Hardanger



### Zweigart Cotton Evenweave

18 Count Davosa  
20 Count Bellana  
20 Count Bellana Couture  
20 Count Bellana Lurex  
22 Count Fine Ariosa  
22 Count Oslo  
25 Count Colmar  
25 Count Colmar Cushions  
25 Count Lugana  
25 Count Lugana - Vintage  
27 Count Linda  
28 Count Annabelle  
28 Count Brittney  
28 Count Brittney - Lurex  
28 Count Jazlyn  
32 Count Murano



### Zweigart Linen Evenweave

20 Count  
Cork Linen  
25 Count  
Dublin Linen  
28 Count  
Cashel Linen  
28 Count  
Cashel - Couture  
28 Count  
Cashel - Lurex  
28 Count  
Cashel - Vintage  
28 Count  
Marne Linen  
28 Count  
Quaker Cloth  
30 count  
Linen Band  
32 Count  
Belfast Linen  
32 Count  
Belfast - Dots  
32 Count  
Belfast - Lurex  
32 Count  
Belfast - Vintage  
35 Count  
Floba Superfine  
36 Count  
Edinburgh Linen  
36 Count  
Edinburgh Vintage



### **DMC Fabrics**

- [14 Count Aida](#)
- [14 Count Aida - Impression](#)
- [14 Count Aida - Iridescent](#)
- [14 Count Aida - Marble](#)
- [28 Count DMC Linen](#)
- [32 Count DMC Linen](#)



### **Charles Craft**

- [Afghans](#)
- [13 count Vinyl Aida](#)
- [14 count Bright Ideas™](#)
- [Fiddler's Cloth](#)
- 

### **Jobelan Evenweave**

- [28 Count Jobelan](#)
- [28 Count Jobelan Overdyed](#)
- [32 Count Jobelan](#)

Perforated paper can also be used for cross stitch and can be bought in a variety of colours.

### ***Threads***

Stranded cotton is used to stitch most designs. This is available in a wide range of colours and is made up of six individual strands of thread.



*Fig.11 Antique letter worked in cross stitch on 14 count aida in two strands of DMC embroidery silk*

Like the fabric manufacturers there are a number of key players in the production of threads and many new companies have appeared on the market over recent years. I have outlined some the main products and would recommend a search on the internet for other thread producers.

#### DMC Mouliné Stranded Cotton

The most widely used thread is stranded cotton. This is available worldwide. It is made from long staple cotton and is mercerized twice to give it exceptional sheen.

The highly resistant dyes are carefully selected to ensure that the thread does not fade as a result of washing or exposure to light (colourfast). Comprised of 6 easily separated strands, stitching results vary, depending on the number of strands used. Colours are washable and fade resistant

Some new **DMC** threads which I have worked with and enjoy are:

#### *Color Variations*

This is a new DMC Cotton thread that offers you a wide range of colours in only one skein.

### ***Light Effects***

A 6-strand thread that can be stitched like DMC Stranded Cotton. (Use the same number of strands) Easy to use and gives good results. A rich range of various light effects: 36 colours including gems, golden, iridescent or vintage shades, fluorescent and glow-in-the-dark!

### ***DMC Satin Floss***

DMC Satin Floss is a shiny radiant thread made from 100% rayon fibers that brings exceptional beauty and sheen to all stitching projects. Satin Floss is the shiniest DMC thread available and it glides easily through fabric. Satin Floss is comprised of 6 size 25 easily separated strands, allowing you to adjust the thickness of your stitching by using a different number of strands.



*Fig.12 DMC Light Effects, Mouliné Stranded Cotton and Satin Floss can all be used for cross stitch*

For more information contact:

<http://www.dmc.com>

## ***Anchor***

Anchor embroidery threads have been manufactured by Coats for over 190 years and are widely available.

They have a range of 460 colour fast shades plus 24 stranded cotton multicolours

<http://www.coatscrafts.co.uk/Products/Needlecrafts/threads>

Anchor and DMC threads are sold in eight metre skeins

## ***Madeira***

Madeira has a wide range of metallic threads which are especially useful for cross stitch and other forms of embroidery.

<http://www.madeira.co.uk>

## ***Colour charts and chart conversion charts***

These can be viewed online through the above websites and a number of individual websites, for example:

<http://www.cross-stitch-centre.co.uk>

There is also a new i-pad App “Thread Tracker 117” which shows five colours related to a base colour which is invaluable when trying to decide which shades to use.

Try a variety of threads to find the ones that suit you most. There are wonderful variegated threads both in stranded cottons and in perle from a wide range of manufacturers.

Dinky Dyes, which is an Australian company has a delicious range of threads which can be obtained from their website:

<http://www.dinkydyes.iinet.net.au>

These threads plus textured threads and braids such as Kreinik add an extra dimension to your embroidery!

<http://www.kreinik.com>

The only advice I would give is that if using threads of uncertain origin check that they are colourfast by placing on a piece of white kitchen paper or material in a saucer, pouring boiling water over the threads and leave for several minutes. If the colour has leached onto the paper do not use it!

Try a variety of threads to find the ones that suit you most. There are some wonderful threads available, both in stranded cottons and in perle from a wide range of manufacturers. These and textured threads and braids such as Kreniek add an extra dimension to your embroidery.

Experiment and enjoy!

Happy stitching *Liz*